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AUTHOR Li, Gertraude Roth
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Hmong refugees in the United States, the state of their resettlement, and possible approaches to resettlement problems. Included are descriptions of the Hmong background and culture; orientation programs in refugee camps; processes and specific problems of Hmong resettlement; Hmong organizations; Hmong adjustment to culture and language through participation in language programs; and a discussion of potential economic adjustment through training, employment, and engagement in cottage industries. Among the Hmong refugee problems identified are the phenomenon of geographical concentration through secondary migration within the United States; Hmong dissatisfaction due to perceived differences in sponsorship aid to different families; insecurity brought about by adjustment problems and differences in the pace of adjustment among different groups; family conflicts arising from the new environment; and older Hmongs' reluctance to work. Recommendations for easing the resettlement process include: (1) establishing an international orientation program; (2) limiting secondary migration through economic incentives; (3) encouraging more Hmong participation and decision-making in resettlement programs; (4) considering cultural differences when establishing suitable ESL programs; and (5) providing job training programs. (Author/MJL)

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THE STATE OF HMONG RESETTLEMENT

AND POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO SOLVE SOME OF ITS PROBLEMS

by

Gertraude Roth Li
World Relief
P.O. Box WRC
Nyack, New York 10960

May 1981

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THE STATE OF HMONG RESETTLEMENT AND POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO SOLVE SOME OF ITS PROBLEMS

Now that Hmong refugees have been resettling in the United States for several years, there is a general awareness among those involved in this resettlement that the Hmong as a group have special needs which are different from those of other Indochinese groups and which must be recognized and dealt with for a successful resettlement.

Three basic differences between Hmong and other Indochinese refugees stand out: 1. The Hmong have extremely strong kinship ties which go beyond those of other Indochinese; 2. Most Hmong are preliterate, meaning that they do not use a written language; and 3. they tend to be the best organized of all refugees groups at this time. All three of these differences play a role in resettlement. The strength of kinship ties leads to an unusual amount of secondary migration, while the people's illiteracy requires longer instruction of English than is necessary for other refugees. Both of these factors present problems in the delivery of social services. Hmong organization, on the other hand, can be used to make a positive contribution to resettlement.

This study is the result of gathering views and opinions of people presently involved in Hmong resettlement, be it as refugees, sponsors, or as representatives of relevant agencies and institutions. It is hoped that the suggestions listed in the final pages of this report will be considered and discussed by those who participate in making decisions concerning Hmong resettlement.

RELEVANT HMONG BACKGROUND FACTORS

The Hmong are a closely knit tribal people who until about twenty years ago occupied the hilltops of Laos. Led by General Vang Pao, and under American guidance they served as the main force in the fight against the communists after the Vietnamese War spilled over into Laos. When the Pathet Lao took over the government in 1975, the Hmong were maltreated, killed or gased from the air for having been supporters of the United States. Immediately after 1975 those Hmong who had the closestties with the military and,therefore, felt most threatened, escaped into Thailand and concentrated in a small number of refugee camps near the border. Due to continued harassment during the years since, more Hmong have sought refuge across the Mekong River.

Before displacement into lower regions during the last twenty years, the Hmong had used a slash-and-burn method of agriculture which forced them to relocate to new hills every few years. Most of the Hmong were animists. Their world was inhabited by many spirits which needed to be placated frequently with rituals and sacrifices. At death they believed the spirit of the deceased to join those spirits.

Though there is a writing system which was created by missionaries for the Hmong language, few Hmong have ever learned or even seen it. During recent years some Hmong had a few years of elementary education in Laotian schools. Only very few were privileged to go on for secondary education. Most of the Hmong, and nearly all women, remained illiterate.

ORIENTATION PROGRAMS IN CAMPS

According to UNHCR statistics, there were 43,275 Hmong in the camps as of February 1981, with the largest number (over 30,000) in Ban Vinai.

Existing orientation programs in the camps teach the prospective immigrants certain basics about life in their future country. So far, every country seems to handle its own orientation in an independent and isolated fashion. However, in dealing with a group of Hmong,whose knowledge of the outside world ranges from very little to nothing, this uncoordinated approach is unfortunate. Certain refugees have pointed out that some Hmong ended up in countries they had no intention of going to. A supra-national or international organization taking the responsibility for providing the Hmong with a rudimentary knowledge of the geographical and political layout of the globe and for informing the refugees of their options would be a great contribution.

RESETTLEMENT

Spontaneous Concentration Through Secondary Migration

After Hmong families have been sponsored to various parts of the country there is a great deal of moving around, creating organizational problems where they go and sponsorship problems where they leave. Sponsors may have gone to all possible efforts, and perhaps expense, to resettle their family, yet secondary migration often happens and causes disappointment and disillusion of the sponsor to the point of not wanting to undertake sponsorship again.

So far a number of large Hmong clusters have developed; Santa Ana, Cal. (10,000); St. Paul, Minnesota (10,000); Missoula, Montana; Illinois (3,500); Denver, Colorado (2,200); Providence, Rhode Island (2,800). There are also sizable groups in Oregon, Washington State, Philadelphia and other areas. These established centers continue to increase in population while small Hmong communities elsewhere tend to decrease in population or disintegrate altogether.

There are three reasons for secondary migration among the Hmong: 1. Kinship ties. 2. Welfare payments which differ from state to state. 3. Lack of training opportunities. The closeness of family ties is the main reason behind secondary migration and with the established clusters of Hmong communities already in existence, there is little chance of controlling this factor. Thus, the only way to influence the extent of secondary migration is by trying to unify welfare payments and/or by providing good training opportunities. The Hmong have an extremely efficient oral communication network (call it grapevine) wherever they are in the U.S. and know immediately about better opportunties elsewhere. They are aware that public assistance payments may differ from

state to state and many have pointed out that CETA training programs which require English tests in most areas do not in some.

It seems that an attempt to disperse the Hmong further will only lead to more secondary migration, leave more Hmong without sponsors and create more disillusioned sponsors. A group of five to ten families is not going to be a stable group. Even a group of about 200 people may not be large enough. For example, Boston, with a Hmong population of about that number has more people leaving than coming. An ideal size may possibly lie around 500 people, which provides the community with enough companionship and still does not overwhelm the service agencies.

Hmong Organization

Traditionally the Hmong have had a deep respect for authority. While in Laos, usually the oldest male member of the extended family was its undisputed head. Above him was a clan leader, and if there were more than one clan in the village, the village head. The Hmong have an extremely pronounced group feeling which those who have come to this country have not only brought with them, but often have also been able to translate into well functioning organizations.

Here in the United States, General Vang Pao is the most respected Hmong leader. He exerts influence over many Hmong communities in the United States and in the camps. For example, most Hmong who during recent months were accepted by the INS to come to the U.S. chose not to leave the camps heeding General Vang Pao's advice which encouraged them not to leave in the hope that a renewed struggle against the communists could be undertaken. Those already in the U.S. were to avail themselves of all possible educational opportunities rather than establish roots by working. By now, however, a return to Laos is again considered unlikely and the Hmong once more are leaving the camps while many

of those who had quit their jobs earlier are beginning to work again, not rarely at jobs which are at a lower level than those they had quit before.

However, the extent of control General Vang Pao has over the Hmong is not clear. He has set up his own mutual assistance association (Lao Family Community) in California, but though he tried to combine all Hmong associations in the U.S. into one organization under his leadership he did not succeed. Hmong communities across the country have formed self-help groups or associations but want to deal with their problems on the local level instead of being organizationally linked to California.

The local associations which go under different names, like Lao Hmong Friendship Association, Hmong Club and others, include Christian and non-Christians and often also some Lao people who are not Hmong. Usually they have written by-laws, are incorporated and collect monthly dues. In view of the fact that in Laos only Christians had formal organizational structures, it is surprising with what speed the associations are set up and how well they seem to function.

The primary function of the association is social, giving the group a framework through which to arrange social events, but the organization also serves as a self-help group, providing volunteer help in case of illness as well as transportation or interpreters when necessary.

A leader is chosen at the annual meeting of the association to act as spokesman for the group. Usually this man is someone who, in addition to having a good education and a reputation for caring for the well-being of the Hmong community, has shown his creativity and know-how in solving problems. The democratic set-up includes a vice-president and a board. On the basis of the survey done for this study there have been no indications of conflicts between potential local leaders. There are some differences among the organizations as to how much they attempt to do beyond providing social activities.

While the group in Lansing, Michigan, for example, seems to be exceptionally eager to be in charge of and take responsibility for certain social services which otherwise would be left entirely in the hands of the local resettlement and service agencies (e.g. they requested that they be informed of new arrivals so that they can provide orientation to them and they suggested to submit a list of employable members to the agencies), there seems to be less unified action in the Santa Ana community where out of about 3,000 families only 400 families are members of the organization. In Denver, Colorado, with its 2,200 Hmong people there are three different organizations, one having a membership of as few as 25 families. However, the leaders of all three come together to discuss common problems. Though one cannot rush to conclusiors on the basis of scanty data, there is a certain likelihood that the smaller communities tend to have a stronger organization than the larger ones.

Hmong Christians may be members of the general association while also belonging to a Hmong group organized through the church, or they may belong exclusively to the Hmong church group with no, or little, interaction with the non-Christian community. In some cases there is actual conflict between the two, but on the whole the Hmong community is not divided. Compared to other Indochinese refugee groups, however, it seems that the Hmong are the best organized.

There have been some serious incidences of conflict between the Hmong and other racial groups in St. Paul, Minnesota (Indians and Blacks), and Denver, Colorado (Chicanos and Blacks). Though the specific circumstances are not always clear, the Hmong have shown themselves to be patient and not challenged the other side. Tensions, however, remain.

For resettlement, the local agencies should realize the possibility Hmong organization offers for taking over certain social service functions. The Hmong people have very strong personalities with independent minds who will take well-

meant advice more easily if it comes through their own channels of authority. They will be cooperative participants in a program which has had their input. Lacking that, however, a program may not succeed. No matter what the level of local organization, the feelings and opinions of the Hmong must go into all major decisions regarding their resettlement in order to obtain their cooperation.

Sponsorship

Each sponsor provides for the sponsored family as he/she sees fit, which means that the economic situation of a particular refugee family immediately after arrival is slightly different from that of other families. This diversity in sponsorship sometimes creates problems between Hmong and sponsors. Since Hmong more than other refugee groups know exactly what goes on in another Hmong family, especially one geographically close to them, they are offended if they are not all treated equally. For example, in one small group of Hmong families, all except one family had a telephone at their disposal enabling them to be in constant contact with each other. The sponsor of one family did not feel a telephone was a necessary item for his sponsored family. In addition, his family had somewhat less money to spend than the other families in the area. Nobody knew at the time that this was the primary reason for the family to move away soon after their arrival.

In order to deal with such problems, the sponsors in a given area should be made aware of the Hmong network and be encouraged to exchange detailed notes on the situation of their families so that, if possible, obvious inequalities can be ironed out before they become a problem. They will also need the services of an outside interpreter at regular intervals, not only after a crisis has arisen. Although a member of one of the local families may be able to communicate well enough in English, he cannot be made responsible for informing the sponsor of any problems in his family or in the community. Kinship relationships

would make this impossible.

The Hmong families, on the other hand, also need to be educated on the efforts and preparations made by the sponsor. One possible improvement suggested by Ms. Sheila McIntire, who heads a coalition of sponsors in Vermont,was to have the Hmong family commit itself to stay with the sponsor for a given period of time, perhaps six months. After six months the family would be free to move to another area, but if they chose to stay on they would have to commit themselves for another six months. In this way certain problems and expectations on the part of the sponsors could be avoided. In Vermont, for example, sponsors applied for and received a grant to hire a special teacher for a deaf-mute Hmong refugee only to discover that their deaf-mute protege moved away just as the grant came through.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

English As A Second Language

Most Hmong agree that language presents the biggest problem in their resettlement. Children usually learn English without great effort and adjust quickly to a school schedule. For adults, however, learning English is not only difficult, but also entails many problems of social relationships.

According to Wayne Haverson, an expert in teaching ESL to non-literates, about 50% of Hmong men and 90% of the women have never stepped inside a school and never held a pencil in their hands. Unlike illiterates from other Southeast Asian countries many did not have an inkling that there was such a thing as a written language before they came to the U.S. Ideally, this background would call for special English classes geared to Hmong needs. Though there are strong indications that literacy in one's own language helps in learning a second language, so far no definite proof has been established. A study on the subject is under way by Barbara Robson of CAL at Ban Vinai. Until a positive relationship has been found to exist between literacy in the native language and the study of a second language there are no funds for teaching Hmong literacy in order to facilitate the study of English. Thus, unless there is a large enough concentration of Hmong in one area calling for pure Hmong classes, most ESL classes combine literate, illiterate, and pre-literate (as the Hmong who do not have or use a written language in their society) Indochinese students.

Among the various Hmong communities in this country, the ESL program at Portland Community College in Corvallis, Oregon seems to be recognized as one of the most successful. About 2,000 students, 40% of whom are illiterate, are presently enrolled in classes at the college.

The most immediate goal of the program is to enable its students to function in this society. Literacy instruction goes along with survival instruction, focusing on time management and home management. Before any reading is taught, simple concepts like right and left, sequencing, etc. are introduced. Basic sight words follow. The teaching does not deal with linguistic technicalities, but concentrates on form language which asks for non-verbal responses. Only the final step will be developmental reading. Bilingual aides introducing new material to be covered in class and serving as troubleshooters have been very useful in the Corvallis and Lansing programs. Problems in the classroom can be brought out and dealt with before causing excessive frustration.

Students, if willing, are kept in the fairly intensive program (3 hrs a day, 4 days a week) for about nine months to a year after which time they will have reached minimal competence. During this time the participant generally will have to be on welfare. It was found that it is not possible to shorten the period of study by adding more class hours. Because our type of learning in the classroom is totally new to the Hmong, more hours per week would result in an overload instead of faster progress.

The large size of the basic program at Corvallis leaves no funds to provide instruction for those students who want to improve their skills further and be able to compete with other groups for slightly better jobs.

The results of the Corvallis program agree with the general consensus found among the people contacted that the Hmong require one to two years of English study, many of them only beginning to make progress after one year. To someone not directly involved in teaching the Hmong, this may sound like an excessively long period raising doubts as to whether the Hmong lack motivation and need a job in order to be motivated.

A Hmong resettlement program in Michigan (around Lansing) shows clearly that there need not be any concern over motivation. In Michigan, too, many Hmong take about 9-12 months before they are able and ready to take a job, but during this study period they are seen to be very serious and highly motivated students. More than once they were upset about Vietnamese students chatting in class and sought out the bilingual troubleshooter to tell him about the disruptive behaviour of the Vietnamese. Though the program in Michigan is small and therefore has students of different backgrounds and needs in the same class (there are even some high school students participating in adult classes), there have been no signs of lack of motivation among the Hmong. The teachers find the Hmong very eager to learn but feel that they, because of their background, will need a year of intensive or fairly intensive education before progress will be visible.

A foreign language environment which makes it impossible to communicate and a set of unknown social rules often produces a feeling of insecurity. For the Hmong this experience can be even more devastating because of their social structure. The elders in the family who commanded authority and respect may find themselves still unable to speak English and earn an income at a time when the wife, who owes the husband unquestioning obedience and never had any money of her own, may have made great strides toward communicating effectively. Perhaps she even holds a job before he does. The younger children who, according to Hmong tradition, are under the absolute control of their parents will almost certainly surpass the adults in their ability to speak English. Thus, the elder who in the past would be the natural candidate for leadership of a group will most likely be bypassed in favor of a younger man who can deal better with the Americans. A combination of similar circumstances

can easily lead to an erosion of self-confidence among the older Hmong population. In this regard the Michigan program has found that using a volunteer as "conversation-partner" can be of help in that the American partner is sometimes able to establish a close relationship with the refugee.

Many Hmong women in the United States participate in English classes and often do better than their male counterparts. However, there is also a large number of women who cannot or do not attend classes. (Two tapes, one especially for Hmong women, another with English idioms, are available at cost through Rev. Marvin Martin, 605 E. Park Street, Wayzata, MN 55391). Because of the great influx of new Hmong to Providence, Rhode Island, for example, demand for English classes is so great that there is a long waiting list. It is projected that by this fall there should be at least one place for the head of each family. This will still leave out many other family members. Even if there is room in the English classes some women may not be able to leave their homes because of small children. In fact, many seem to be so busy having babies that there is little time for anything else.

It has been pointed out that some women actually do not want their husbands to become proficient in English because he will then be gone for a job leaving them, the women, at home without company. Still another problem has been that older people do not want to study English in the same classes with younger people because their authority will be affected. Even in English classes held in a church for women only, the older women felt embarassed to be studying together with younger women.

Problems of endangered social relationships through common English classes may be lessened in centers with large Hmong populations. Since those centers provide a large number of classes, members of the same family may find it easy to go to different classes, making the process of study less embarassing. The uneven outcome and its implications for social status and relationships, however, should

remain the same. Hmong parents everywhere find themselves in uncomfortable situations when they have to rely on the linguistic expertise of their children.

Religion: Birth, Marriage, Death

For those Hmong who became Christians while still in Laos, in camp or soon after arrival (one informant set the percentage of Christians among the Hmong at 35%), adjustment to life in America is somewhat easier. They are usually welcomed with open arms by the sponsoring churches and if there is enough of a Hmong population in the area may even have their own Hmong services with one of their own pastors. Their religious activities give them additional opportunities for social gatherings, of which there never seem to be enough for their liking, and shamanistic rituals surrounding birth or death are easier to give up if they can be replaced by Christian customs.

Those Hmong who came to this country as animist find that many of their shamanistic rituals that were part of Hmong lifecycle have either lost meaning or are impossible to continue. Since in Laos the rituals varied from clan to clan and could be performed only by the shaman of the particular clan, they can no longer be carried out appropriately if the shaman had died during the years of displacement and war, or if he did not come to the U.S.

Many Hmong now feel that though they knew the way to an afterlife in their country, things are different here and a new way must be found. Though this feeling is by no means conceptualized by all, churches in various parts of the United States report that there is a great spiritual interest among the Hmong and that they often reach out by themselves. Since they seem to have a psychological need for the kind of support religion can give, churches should take the initiative in reaching out to the Hmong communities during this transition time. It is quite possible that this interest will wane after a few years of cultural adjustment.

The Hmong naturally try to continue some of their customs surrounding the important events in human life, birth, marriage and death. Since natural childbirth is the only way of birth known to them, they are exceedingly frightened of cesarian birth. A cesarian is sometimes necessary to save the baby's or the mother's life, but especially with the Hmong it should be used for such cases only, and not as is done today with alarming frequency as a convenience.

So far marriage customs have continued in the traditional patterns: it is either arranged by the parents, or children will like each other and then marry with their parents' consent, or, if permission is not forthcoming or the brideprice cannot be agreed upon, the prospective groom may simply kidnap his bride, sometimes with, sometimes without her consent. While the average marriage age used to be 12-17 for girls and 16-20 for boys, it is now being postponed a little. There have been some problems concerning marriage arrangement, which could involve legal problems like a marriage-eager man kidnapping a minor, but so far the Hmong community has been ready and able to solve these kinds of problems with the U.S. legal authorities staying out of the picture. Quite a few Hmong marriages are not registered with the authorities and are technically illegal, creating problems of welfare payments for children born to the unregistered couple.

In Laos the Hmong animists had elaborate rituals surrounding the death of a family member involving sacrifices of chickens or other animals and emanating a great deal of noise. Most Hmong realize that these customs cannot be preserved in their entirety in this country even if an appropriate shaman is available. New ways need to be found, for example, a tape of certain musical rituals may be substituted. Some funeral homes have been quite accomodating, but Hmong communities should be advised to make arrangements with one or a few funeral homes in their area in advance, rather than waiting until a death has occurred. In this way their minds can be at ease since they know what to expect. Similar prior arrangements would also be advisable with one or several hospitals, if the local

community wants to avoid that a seriously ill Hmong patient die in the hospital with no family members present, which some feel is one of the worst misfortunes that can happen.

Conflicts in Family Relationships

Family conflicts arising from the new environment pose a potential danger to the stability of the Hmong family and community. In Laos the husband had absolute power over his wife and children. He could, and did, beat his wife as he saw fit. Since she knew her position and had no independent means and no place to go, there was no issue. After coming to this country, however, many women are no longer willing to tolerate beatings and other forms of abuse. Most of them have heard that they have certain legal rights, though rarely will they have had these rights explained to them. Thus, the wife may threathen her husband that she will run away, call the police, or become a prostitute, etc. while the husband will in turn threaten to kill her before she has a chance to do any of the above. If the wife holds a job and has money of her own, the likelihood of conflicts is increased. There already have been many conflicts of this kind. In some areas, as in Boston and Providence, the state mental health centers, which have Indochinese on their staffs, stand ready to counsel families who have such problems. Though there may not have been many legal divorces yet, separations there have been.

Traditionally, the parent-child relationship has been very close. Hmong children are taught early responsibility and are generally eager to prove that they are very much grown-up. To many Hmong,American teenagers and even 20 year olds are extremely childlike. So far the children still accept the authority of the parents without reservation, although there is a widespread realization that this may well be only a matter of time.

As part of their effort to help a family in its resettlement, some sponsors have tried to bring the Hmong children together with American children by placing them into a summer camp. Usually such attempts have met failure. Neither the families nor the children want such separation. Sponsors should be made aware that these well meant efforts may, in fact, be detrimental to a successful adjustment by undermining the cohesiveness of the Hmong family.

Recreation and entertainment in Hmong terms will also be social activities which combine a wide range of ages. For example, a soccer team, including everyone up to about 35 years of age, was an enjoyable form of recreation in one community.

ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT

Training Programs

The Hmong are eager to learn, whether it be English, vocational skills or a combination of both. Their network will tell them quickly and accurately where the good training opportunities for them are, and where the CETA programs, which usually require a certain proficiency in English, can be entered into without a test. Recently many Indochinese refugees are applying and receiving educational grants to take certain courses at community colleges without sufficient language background. Since refugees do not count as foreign students, they cannot be tested for admission to any course that American students are not tested for. Thus, they can sit in on courses (or cut them), understand little or nothing of what is being said, but still receive their stipend. Given the Hmong network, the Hmong might well decide as a group to avail themselves of this financial source if other avenues are not available. So far very few have done so.

Training programs that are available are those for all refugees; welding, electronics, machine shops, etc. In many places the number of specializations are few, channelling many people into few areas. Programs in carpentry and forestry (unfortunately at this time part of an ailing construction industry) are feasible and appropriate occupations for the Hmong, but have not been tried. However, any vocational training program presupposes a basic knowledge of English which many Hmong do not have when they enter the program. Thus, they may receive a handsome looking diploma for having completed a certain vocational course, when in fact, they did not learn anything but were physically present only.

Since acquiring a basic knowledge of English already takes many Hmong several months, the total amount of time necessary for learning English and a skill may be discouraging. However, as the study of English cannot be a full-time pursuit, for reasons discussed earlier, the best solution would be a combination of ESL and

vocational training in Hmong. Until this has been tried in a pilot program one should not dismiss the idea as being too costly. Actually, it may shorten the time on welfare for many.

An Earn-And-Learn Program was tried and found to be very successful in conjunction with the ESL program in Corvallis, Oregon. Teenagers and people in their low 20's had the opportunity to earn some money by working in the fields while practicing the English they were learning in class at the same time. Unfortunately, the program which provided free transportation had to be discontinued because it was ruled that all available funds had to be used for the benefit of all refugees.

Jobs

Voluntary agencies generally urge their refugees to take a job as soon as possible rather than going for education first. Keeping too many refugees on welfare is expensive and will influence the total number of refugees accepted by the country, thus condemning more people to live in camps longer. Holding a job also holds a key to future advancement for the refugee himself or herself.

Some people,who are knowledgeable about Hmong problems, feel the job-first theory holds just as much value for the Hmong as for the other refugees. In fact, entry level jobs usually don't require much verbal communication and what needs to be learned is easily learned by observation. Any health and safety factors that need to be understood are conceptual and should be explained in the native language anyway. However, more people seem to agree that the Hmong do have additional difficulties over and above those of other refugees and should not be "thrown" into a job too soon. Unlike most Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian refugees, they have never worked as an employee before. Without appropriate preparation, spending the major portion of each day at work, without Hmong company and often in indoor sedentary occupations, frequently leads them to be frustrated and quit

the job. Should this happen more than once, the chance of finding a new job becomes progressively worse. If several Hmong are able to work side by side there is a better chance for success at an earlier time.

Older Hmong present a special problem to resettlement agencies. Sometimes they may refuse to consider taking a job, because according to their tradition a parent over 40 or 50 years of age who has working children does not need to work, but should be taken care of by their children. The children accept such responsibility and will not urge a parent to work. In this country the economic picture is different. Though their income may often be very low and hardly be enough to support parents in addition to their own family, adult children still will not ask their parents to support themselves. If an older person does not want to work, and keeps himself busy as a counselor in the community, we can do little better than acknowledge the person to be "retired."

Many older Hmong people, on the other hand, are very distressed about their lack of progress in learning English, and about not being able to learn a skill and earn money. Special programs for these "elderly" are needed, because with nothing to do, they are filled with loneliness, boredom and despair.

Cottage Industries

Many Hmong women do beautiful embroidery, while many men are skilled basket weavers. In a few places an attempt was made by American organizers to have the Hmong use these skills for the marketplace. However, it was found that the Hmong were unable to commit themselves to producing a given number of items in a given period of time. In short, they were not ready for the demands of the commercial world. So far, the idea has come from the sponsors or service agencies. If a Hmong association took the initiative to launch a similar program, deciding among themselves who should be responsible for producing how much, the outcome might very well be different.

Welfare Mentality

At the present time the federal government reimburses the states for 3 years of refugee assistance per refugee. In Minnesota the state agencies would like to have this time extended to four years, while the voluntary agencies would like to see it reduced to 1½ years. 1½ years of assistance does not seem to be an unreasonably short period for a Hmong who is able to participate in a good English and/or training program. However, 1½ years do seem harsh for those who live in an area where there are only average, no intensive, adult education courses available, or for women with children who find it impossible to study several hours each day.

Those Hmong who have good programs available, have been shown to be very eager to get off welfare. They do understand the value of self-sufficiency and have added their own motivation to become self-sufficient by wanting to be able to sponsor more Hmong to come to America. This seems to indicate that a cash-mentality per se is not the problem. If it does exist in some communities, one should look into the quality of the alternatives.

POINTS RECOMMENDED FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE IMPLEMENTATION

Orientation Programs in Camps:

Establishment of some kind of international orientation program

Resettlement

Secondary migration might be limited in scope through

1. no further dispersement beyond the existing centers
2. setting up model training centers, especially in smaller communities in order to keep the existing population from leaving and to attract newcomers
3. nationally unified refugee assistance payments

Hmong organizations should play a more active part in resettlement.

1. Agencies and institutions involved in the delivery of services to a Hmong community should establish a good relationship with local Hmong leaders and discuss problems and decisions regarding Hmong resettlement with them.
2. Hmong organizations should be encouraged to take the initiative in solving problem in their own way; e.g. let them do an orientation program, submit a list of employable members, etc.
3. Whenever possible Hmong should be used in the delivery of services to the Hmong community.

Sponsorship can be facilitated by

1. more information sharing and coordination among sponsors of Hmong refugees in the same location.
2. regularly scheduled visits by interpreters
3. time commitments by refugees

Cultural adjustment

English as a second language:

1. Need for good ESL programs with focus (especially on home management and employment) everywhere. These programs would be best implemented in conjunction with some vocational training in Hmong language.
2. ESL classes for Hmong students should be formed according to sex and age.
3. Need for bilingual troubleshooters in the classroom to avoid frustration.
4. Development of a program of volunteer "conversation partners."
5. Classes for Hmong literacy as soon as funds can be made available.

Religion, birth, marriage and death:

1. Churches should be more active in reaching out to the Hmong
2. Hmong organizations should be encouraged to make prior arrangements with hospitals and funeral homes if they want to have special needs met for their members.
3. Doctors attending Hmong patients must be made aware that cesarians must only be resorted to when absolutely necessary and that the reasons for drawing blood must be explained carefully.

Conflicts in family relationships:

1. Women's rights should be explained
2. Recreation programs should include a wide age range.

Economic adjustment

Training:

1. Establishment of vocational training programs in Hmong language (at least a pilot program), benefiting especially, but not exclusively the older people.
2. Social service agencies should request the local Hmong group to submit a list of employable members and concentrate on preparing this group for work.

Jobs.

1. Expect about one year in employment related language programs and/or vocational training before most will be ready for a job.

Cottage industries:

1. The local Hmong community should be encouraged to take the initiative in launching a program of cottage industries and given support in executing it.